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197 Westermann has shown[1] that the Voltaic tribes all speak languages belonging to the *Gur* group of Sudanic languages. The Mossi (or, more accurately, the Mole-Dagbane speaking) group all speak Mole-Dagbane dialects, which form a distinct branch of the *Gur* family. The people of Taleland speak a Dagbane dialect. From Zuarungu northwards Mole influence is linguistically predominant.

171 The cultural uniformity of the Voltaic region is equally strikingly shown in forms of social and economic organization, in custom, belief, and material culture. Though local variations are great and have important sociological implications, as we shall find, the common patterns and contents are obvious.[2]

Among the Voltaic peoples, the Mossi, the Dagomba, and the Mamprusi have centralized forms of political organization of the type common throughout West Africa. The aristocracies of the three nations claim to be kinsfolk descended from conquering immigrants who established themselves first in the country of the Mamprusi and spread northwards and southwards from there. The three paramount chiefs still maintain ceremonial ties accounted for by quasi-mythical traditions of kinship and migration well known in all three countries.

101 Between these centralized states stretches a block of tribes which seem
● 619 to have no political unity. Each so-called tribe appears to be independent of and sporadically at enmity with its neighbours, and there is no overriding central authority. Nor does the tribe seem to have any internal political unity.

167 We owe to Rattray the discovery that these central Voltaic tribes com-
619 prise two major groups of communities. On the one side are those that
648 claim to be the descendants of immigrants from parts of the country other than their present habitats. On the other side are communities that claim to be the autochthonous inhabitants. The two groups are found in every tribe, including the Mossi, Mamprusi, and Dagomba, living side by side and indistinguishable from one another by broad cultural or linguistic criteria. Many of the immigrant communities claim descent from forbears of the Mampuru ruling stock. Though now wholly amalgamated with the alleged aboriginal inhabitants, they have certain ritual observances and a system of chiefship similar to those of the Mamprusi. In fact the Paramount Chief of Mampurugu appoints many of their chiefs. But this is symbolical of kinship and ideological ties, not of political suzerainty. For though these communities may be regarded as the distant outliers of the Mampuru social and political structure, they are politically independent of the Mamprusi.

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[1] Westermann, D., *Die westlichen Sudansprachen und ihre Beziehungen zum Bantu*, pp. 121 ff.; and in Rattray, R. S., *Tribes of the Ashanti Hinterland*, chap. iv.

[2] The literature on this area is scanty and of very unequal value. The following are the most informative ethnographical monographs, in order of reliability: Rattray, op. cit.; Delafosse, op. cit.; Labouret, H., *Les Tribus de Rameau Lobi*, Travaux et Mémoires de l'Institut d'Ethnologie, Paris, 1931; Tauxier, L., *Les Noirs du Soudan*, Paris, 1912; id., *Les Noirs du Yatenga*, Paris, 1917; Dim Delobsom, A. A., *L'Empire du Mogho-Naba*, Institut de Droit Comparé, Études de Sociologie et d'Ethnologie juridiques, Paris, 1932; Cardinall, A. W., *Natives of the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast*, London, 1925.

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CHAPTER II

THE MEANING OF 'TALLENSI'

Tribal Divisions

101 TALELAND is, as we have seen, merely a portion of a far greater, ecologically uniform region, marked off only by an artificial boundary. The same kind of subsistence farming is practised throughout the whole region of which Taleland forms a part. The culture of its inhabitants likewise represents a far more widely spread type. Before we embark on our sociological analysis we must know what sort of a unit we are dealing with. Have the people of Taleland any form of cultural or structural unity and singularity that differentiates them from neighbouring socio-geographical areas? Or are they a fraction of a greater society arbitrarily circumscribed to suit the convenience of the field worker?

101 The question is not so easy to answer as might be expected. For the
619 natives of Taleland, like the other so-called 'tribes' north of the Gambaga scarp, have no obvious political unity distinguishing them from like political units. In terms of their own political and social organization there is no single government exercising authority over all the people of Taleland, and only over them, within their own defined territory. This has been the most serious obstacle confronting British administration in this area.[1] We must approach the problem from a different angle.

197 In the literature and in administrative practice the inhabitants of
101 Taleland are called the Tallensi[2] and are distinguished as a 'tribe' from neighbouring 'tribes', the Kusaasi on the east, the Namnam or Nabdam on the north, the Nankansi or Gorənsi (in Talni, *Gərisi*) on the west, the Mamprusi on the south of them. All these groups speak dialects of Mole-Dagbane. But Kusal, Nabte, and Gərni are closely akin to Mole, whereas Talni and Mampurule have closer affinities with Dagbane. These dialect areas have no strict boundaries. At the frontiers one passes through
[191] intermediate zones where the people speak intermediate dialects or are equally familiar with two contiguous dialects. But it is clearly recognized, both by the natives and by outside observers, that the tribes enumerated above have more in common with one another linguistically than any of them have with the peoples of the same cultural type farther away, such as the Wɔɔlisi (usually called the Kassena in the literature and by the

[1] For an outline of Tale political organization and a discussion of some of the theoretical problems raised by it, see *African Political Systems*, edited by M. Fortes and E. E. Evans-Pritchard, Oxford, 1940.

[2] *Sc.* Talense (Rattray), Talansi (Cardinall), sing. Talenga, Talanga. This form, correctly Talənsi, sing. Talənga, is taken from the dialect of the Zuarungu district (Gorəni, or in the dialect of the Tallensi, Gərni). The artificial spelling I use has been adopted to show that the Tallensi regard this phonetic form as a foreigners' version of the name by which they designate themselves. In their own dialect (Talni) they call themselves Talis, sing. Talənga. Talni forms will henceforth be used for all vernacular words in the text.

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Administration) of Navrongo or the Bulisi (Builsa) of Kanjaga district, whose tongues are not intelligible to Mole or Dagbane speakers.

In the same way it is well known that the Kusaasi, Namnam, Gorənsi, and Tallensi are more closely allied in culture *inter se* than they are with other neighbouring 'tribes'. In this part of West Africa one can often tell where a person comes from by his facial cicatrizations.[1] People of these four groups all have the same facial marks, a slashed scar (*bεn*) running diagonally downwards from the bridge of the nose across one or both cheeks, which are, in addition, often embellished with a neat tracery of tiny incisions (*yiis*) spreading in herring-bone lines over the forehead and down to the neck. These markings are an emblem of their cultural uniformity, as compared with neighbouring groups. Mamprusi and Mossi, frankly contemptuous of their nakedness and poverty, lump them all together under the sobriquet 'Gorənsi'. Since the coming of the white man they have been called 'the Farafaras' and they are beginning to accept this appellation, which is said to be derived from one of their customary expressions of greeting, *ni i fara-fara-fara*.

There are, in short, no precise linguistic or cultural boundaries between these four groups. Nor are there precise political or structural boundaries between them. They overlap with one another in every way; and further research would, I am certain, show that the Kusaasi, Namnam, and Gorənsi also overlap to some extent with their neighbours other than the Tallensi. At the same time, each of these four groups is considered by members of the other three and by its own members to be in some way a distinct territorial, linguistic, and cultural group. It is, however, a distinction of degree, not of kind. Each group comprises a cluster of communities which have more in common among themselves, linguistically and in the details and nuances of custom, belief, and values, than any of them have with other neighbouring communities. They have closer social ties among themselves than any of them have with their other neighbours, though they have no apparent political unity and never, in the past, combined for war against external enemies or for common defence.

This largely implicit feeling of their difference from neighbouring dialect areas which prevails amongst such a cluster of communities is not based on a conception of tribal unity. Sharp distinctions of custom, belief, and values, as well as of structural relationships, are recognized within the cluster. They are, indeed, of fundamental importance for the social interrelations of the communities making up the cluster. On the same principle as before, the cluster is subdivided into smaller constellations of communities which have more in common, closer bonds, *inter se*, than any of them have with other communities. Culturally, and structurally, as we shall discover in the course of our study, society in the Volta region is built up on a segmentary principle. The degree of unity, coherence, autonomy, or singularity of a socio-geographic segment of

[1] These distinguishing facial marks were noted by the first European traveller who visited the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast, the Frenchman Binger. Cf. Binger, Capitaine, *Du Niger au Golfe de Guinée*, 1893, vol. ii, pp. 34–7. For diagrams of these markings see Armitage, C. H., *The Tribal Markings and Marks of Adornment of the Natives of the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast*, Royal Anthropological Institute, 1924, especially figs. 4, 6, 26.

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society is a function of its segmentary relations to other like regions and to more inclusive regions, up to the limit of the widest frame of social reference relevant for that region. In consequence, social groups are identified, in relation to one another by a technique of contraposition. This is very clearly seen among the Tallensi.

Cultural Segmentation of the Tallensi

From Zuarungu one can see the silhouette of the Tong Hills bounding the horizon seven miles to the south. That, say the people of Zuarungu, is where the Tallensi live. As a group they consider themselves to be quite distinct from the Tallensi, though many individuals have kinsmen among the latter—their own mothers' people, or more distant cognatic kinsmen, or affinal relatives. Even nowadays, when women and children can travel safely anywhere, intercourse between Zuarungu and the Tallensi is confined almost entirely to trade in the markets. In former times it was more than a Zuarungu man's life was worth to venture amongst the Tallensi unless he had kinsfolk there to protect him.

Between Zuarungu and the Tong Hills stretches an unbroken chain of settlements—Biuk, Ba'ari, Zubiun, Tongo, Wakii, and Soog. The people of Biuk speak Gɔrni and consider themselves an outpost of Zuarungu. But a number of them live across the watercourse which separates their land from that of Ba'ari, side by side with Ba'ari families and farming on Ba'ari soil.[1] Such overlapping of contiguous settlements is common. The Ba'ari people are Tallensi, though a great many of them understand Gɔrni as easily as their mother tongue owing to their contiguity with Gɔris. Gɔrni forms have even crept into their vocabulary. Between them and their Gɔre neighbours there is much intermarriage; but the insistence on their distinctness remains. The picture is the same from whichever direction one enters Taleland. At Gar I was once told 'We are Namnam-Tallensi'—an accurate enough description of their linguistically and culturally intermediate position.

And yet, everywhere along the frontier the Tong Hills are pointed out as the real centre of the Tallensi. To the testimony of their neighbours may be added that of the Administration which has always regarded the Tallensi as a distinct, if amorphous, political unit.

The easiest if most superficial approach to the social structure of a society is through the nomenclature of social identification, the techniques by which people sort out their relations to one another in order to know how to conduct themselves. But nomenclature, like the conduct it tends to precipitate, is always a function of a situation, not an absolute classification.

Foreigners and their neighbours have a single label for all the Tallensi. The latter equally make no distinction in nomenclature between one Gɔrɔŋ and another, or one Nabt and another, no matter where he may come from, when the circumstances require no more precise specification.

This technique of identification is based on locality, direction, propinquity, and actual or alleged contrasts of language and institutions; it is a technique of contraposition arising from the segmentary structure of the society, and is the commonest method of social classification employed

[1] And Biuk is also linked to the Tallensi by clanship as we shall see (Ch. IV).

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upheld. I have heard the Chief of Tongo upbraid a young man of his own segment of the sub-clan for abducting the wife of a Sɪk man. The chief denounced this breach of *mabiirət* as a depravity possible only since the coming of the white man, and ordered the girl to be sent back.

Other Namoo communities are found at Pusunamoo, Baluŋ, and Kpɔlɔg (or Pwɔlɔg), beyond Dkoog. For practical purposes these Namoo groups are almost entirely cut off from Tongo. Culturally they are Gɔrisi, but Tongo people describe them as 'our kinsfolk (*ti mabiis*)'; and there is even a myth to the effect that Pusunamoo was founded by a kinsman of Mosuor who accompanied him on his flight from Mampurugu but parted company from him before he reached Tongo. As, however, these places lie beyond the horizon of the regular social relations of Tongo, their 'kinship' with Tongo becomes effective only by chance. They have no ceremonial relationship with Tongo. They do not attend Tongo funerals except as individuals drawn thither by personal cognatic ties, and they would not easily obtain redress if one of their wives were abducted by a Tongo man. Nevertheless, their 'kinship' with Tongo, nominal though it seems to be, forms an essential element, in all the Namoo communities mentioned, of the natives' view of their society and its structure. To some extent also the chain principle holds. Pusunamoo and Baluŋ have a good deal of social intercourse and regular social relations with Dkoog, and the latter serves as a link between them and Tongo. They are thus linked with Tongo loosely and by a relay, but more substantially than merely by a fiction, and through Tongo with the other branches of Mosuor's descendants.

In the Sie district, as we have seen, of the Namoo clans not held to be connected by origin with the children of Mosuor, Gban has the closest links with the latter. In the social perspective of a Tongo man, however, its identity tends to be masked by Sie. Gban is thought of as a satellite clan of Sie, in the same way as Zoo is regarded as a satellite clan of Tongo by the people of the Sie district. Spatial and political relations give rise to this point of view, and the habit of classifying social groups by contraposition gives it ready expression. This is the case also with Namɔɣalug and Gar, which are connected with Sie in much the same way as Zoo is with Tongo. There are other Namoo clans or Namoo segments of composite clans in this district which fall within the political orbit of Gbee. Some are linked by ties of clanship to adjacent settlements of Gɔrisi or Namnam. Some have so far assimilated the customs and dialectal peculiarities of their Gɔrisi or Namnam neighbours that people from the centre of Taleland hardly consider them to be Tallensi, though they themselves claim to have closer social affinities with the Tallensi than with the Gɔrisi or Namnam. In this interstitial area the mosaic of micro-cultural variations and the pattern of clan organization, though similar in principle to what is found in the vicinity of Tongo, are very intricate.

Namoos from this area marry extensively with Sie and Yamɔlɔg and more frequently with Tongo than the peripheral Namoo communities on the other side, viz. Pusunamoo, Baluŋ, and Kpɔlɔg. Thus, any Tongo man is far more likely to have cognatic ties with a place like Namɔɣalug

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619 or Kpatia than with Baluŋ. He has more frequent social contact and
621 closer economic relations with the former places than with the inhabitants of the latter. In the past the people of Sie sometimes took up arms to aid Gbee or Kpatia, and Tongo people might have been drawn in to aid Sie. A Tongo man therefore thinks of Gbee and Kpatia (and this applies to the other Namoo communities in their vicinity as well) as potential war allies of his clan in former times. He never thinks of Pusunamoo, Baluŋ, or Kpoləg in this way. In spite of this, Tongo people insist that the people of Pusunamoo, at any rate, are closer kin to them than, say, the Namoos of Gbee or Kpatia, since their founding ancestor was a relative of Mosuor himself. There seems to be a contradiction between the actualities of social relations and the formal ties of putative genealogy. Other things being equal spatial proximity exercises a stronger pull than assumed genealogical proximity. This principle has a general application in Tale social structure.

The Meaning of 'Namoo'

621 The meaning of the appellation 'Namoo' in the social structure of the Tallensi has now become clear. We have examined it from the vantage point of Tongo. Had we elected to start from Gbee, for example, we should have obtained a picture built on the same principles but with a different perspective. Gorni-speaking Namoos beyond Kpatia, who have so remote and occasional a relevance for the normal life of Tongo that even nowadays hardly anything is known of them, are a significant element in the social frame of reference of the people of Gbee. Their community of stock and of distinctive custom which all Namoos in Taleland and the adjacent areas recognize, is not thought of as confined within territorial or political boundaries. But for every maximal lineage and clan their fellow Namoos are distributed on a graded scale of relevance according to their structural ties with them. Several factors affect the relevance of one Namoo group for another: ties of clanship; political ties; the ties of spatial contiguity or proximity; the belief in a special tie, closer than that of general kinship (*mabiirət*), by which Namoos are grouped together, and which, though assimilated to the tie of clanship on mythical grounds, is not so close as true clanship ties. All these, taken together, map out the main structural ties of any Namoo maximal lineage. These ties fall in a series of concentric zones, as it were, by which all the Namoo communities are arranged on a scale of diminishing social relevance for the unit that forms the centre of the given network of structural relations. Theoretically they extend 'from the land of the Dagomba (Dagbəŋ) to the land of the Mossi (Mooga)', but the greater their distance in space from the central unit, the less likely are they to be actualized in the ordinary life of any of its members. In fact, outside a geographical radius of some five or six miles the farther zones of Namoo connexions have hardly any relevance for the central unit.

The pattern of social relations arising out of clanship ties in the narrow sense holds for other structural ties assimilated to them in form but founded on different factors. In respect of these ties, too, every Namoo clan or maximal lineage may be regarded as the centre of a field of

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'brethren' (*mabiis*) and, in fact, this brotherhood includes also the *Bɔɣa* of all the clans, Tallensi or non-Tallensi, that take part in the cycle of the Great Festivals.

The idea reflects the sense of belonging to a wider politico-ritual community than their own local cluster of clans that is at the back of every Talaŋ's mind. This notion of the unity of their External *Bɔɣar* cult is especially strong among the Hill Talis, though each congregation has its distinctive variants of some of the ritual conventions. Hence a man who has been initiated into the cult at the *Bɔɣar* at which his own lineage worships can be present at sacrifices at the *Bɔɣar* of any other congregation of Hill Talis, whereas a Zubiuŋ or a Tongo man would not be admitted to the ceremony. This corresponds to the close interlocking of clan with clan and lineage with lineage among the Hill Talis by spatial, clanship, and ritual ties.

It is the same with the cult of the Earth. All Earth shrines (*tɔŋgbana*) are 'brethren' (*mabiis*), the localized places of worship, for defined social groups, of the universal Earth (*Tɛŋ*). The pattern of doctrine and ritual practice of the Earth cult has a much greater uniformity over a wider area than that of the *Bɔɣar* cult. In comparison with the practices of the Hill Talis, the *Bɔɣar* cult among all the other non-Namoo clans of Taleland appears to be whittled down to its barest essentials of rite and belief, and outside the Hill Talis, different *Bɔɣar* congregations are strictly exclusive of one another. In the cult of the Earth identical beliefs and dogmas, norms of conduct, ritual conventions, and social settings hold throughout Taleland. Indeed this is true of the whole of the Northern Territories.[1] This reflects the fact that the economic relations of man to land are practically identical for all the peoples of this area; that the social relations of men, as these are determined by their occupation and exploitation of land, are all of the same pattern throughout this area; and that their mystical notions of the Earth are identical. Tallensi sum this up in the idea that 'the Earth is indivisible (*tɛŋ la pu bɔkɔra*)'.

Bɔɣar and *Tɛŋ* are the foci around which interclan and interlineage associations crystallize out and through which the two dominant religious conceptions of the Tallensi act as the mechanisms and the sanctions of loyalty, amity, co-operation, and respect for one another's corporate rights between genealogically independent units. And these two foci of ritual consolidation are complementary. In spatial relations every maximal lineage belongs to one set of adjacent lineages in the *Bɔɣar* cult and to a different set of adjacent lineages in the Earth cult. It has, there-

[1] The cult of the Earth is a prominent feature of native religion throughout West Africa. The form it takes in the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast is common, in its main outlines, to all the peoples of the Sudanese Zone. Cf. references to it *passim* in the previously cited works of Delafosse, Tauxier, Labouret, and Monteil, *Les Bambarra du Segou et du Kaarta*. Rattray, op. cit., gives many data on the cult as found in the Northern Territories, but his interpretations of these data are open to question. He gives much information on its Ashanti form in his works on the Ashanti. The best information from Nigeria is given in C. K. Meek's *Law and Authority in a Nigerian Tribe*. A point of importance is that there is no convincing evidence of the Earth being personified as a 'Goddess' in the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast—certainly not among the Tallensi—as Rattray and Meek claim is the case for the Ashanti and the Ibo.

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CHAPTER VIII

TOTEMISM AMONG THE TALIS AND OTHER NON-NAMOOS

The Unity of all the Talis

IT is commonly said, everywhere in Taleland, that the Talis are 'all one' (*bonyeni*). The Talis themselves, in spite of their elaborate differentiation by clanship ties, always picture themselves as a cohesive group. As might be expected, the implications of this idea vary considerably as between the Talis adjacent to Tongo and the Hill folk. For any of the latter, with the exception of Yinduur and Sii, it meant in the old days, among other things, mutual assistance in war against the Namoos. Yinduur and Sii, however, never fought against Tongo, and sometimes took the side of Tongo on account of their ties with it through the chiefship held by the clan head of Sii. Yet nobody would be more indignant than a Sii man if it were seriously suggested that this indicated closer bonds between his clan and the Tongo Namoos than between his clan and the other Talis; for in a fight between the Talis and any settlement other than Tongo, Sii and Yinduuri would rally unhesitatingly to the side of their 'kin', the Talis. The people of Zubiun, again, invariably took the side of Tongo in war, whereas the people of Ba'ari generally ranged themselves with the Hill clans. Gbizug, bound by equally strong politico-ritual ties to the other Talis and to Tongo, was ritually prohibited from taking part in war between them at all. In keeping with its function of maintaining the political balance between the Namoos and the Talis, it was the traditional peace-maker. But Gbeog fought with its Talis kin and might even attack Zubiun. Thus by the crucial test of warfare the Talis do not form a single, permanently cohesive group. But at the same time, clans that stood outside the Hill Talis cluster, or opposed them in warfare, never infringed their specific ties of clanship by doing this. Zubiun, for instance, would fight against the Hill Talis in a general war, but not against Ba'ari, with which it has clanship ties. For the same reason Sii, coming to the aid of Tongo, would attack Gorogo or Gbeog but not a Tenzugu clan.

These divergent loyalties in war are indices of divergent social and political ties springing from the internal structural differentiation and local relationships of the Talis. They are an aspect of the interlocking of Talis and non-Talis in the social system. They do not invalidate the claim of the Talis to be a cohesive group. Their unity is based on the network of structural ties binding them to one another. It is symbolized, in native thought, by a number of ritual observances that are closely correlated with their social ties and cleavages; and its most significant expression is the cycle of the Great Festivals.

Funeral Customs as Criteria of Social Alinement among Talis Clans

For a Namoo, the social definition of the Talis is primarily 'those who

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619 gird their dead with a sheepskin loin cover (*ba suona pehug*) and taboo (*kih*) the tortoise (*pakur*) and the water-tortoise (*miey*)'. The people of Zubiun, as we have seen, also fix upon their mortuary and funeral rites and their totemic avoidances as the two main indices of their affinity with the Talis. They add to this their special ritual relationship with the Earth, symbolized by the office of the tendaana.

764 [884] Most of the Talis, it is true, gird the dead (that is, males who have begotten children before they die and are therefore considered to be socially mature) with a sheepskin; but there are a few exceptions. The people of Ka'ar use an oribi (*walag*) skin, and the people of Gorogo, as well as some of the Teelag lineages, use only a piece of string

619 184 The sheepskin has the same ritual value for the Talis as the goatskin has for the Namoos. Identical beliefs and attitudes lie behind these differences of usage, which are clearly a function of the social cleavage between Namoos and Talis. Members of either group often have great knowledge of the mythology, the ritual practices, and the distinctive beliefs and customs of the other group. They pick up this knowledge when they go on visits to their maternal kin in the other group, and the underlying identity of beliefs and values makes this easy. Yet it would be inconceivable for the people of either group deliberately to take over the usages of the other group. The assimilations of custom that have taken place have been unconscious.

173 Talis explain deviations from the common ritual, such as those of the people of Ka'ar or of Gorogo, by the cliché, 'Our ancestors desired it so'. Thus the Gorogo people claim that their founding ancestor originally came from the Woolaga country. They still have ceremonial ties with the people of Chana, which they say was their ancestor's place of origin. They connect their custom of putting a string on a corpse with this myth, for both myth and custom distinguish them from the other Hill Talis. It is significant that the Teelag lineages which have the same custom have no clanship ties with Gorogo, nor is any explanation offered by either group of the common ritual usage.

577 764 The Tallensi see the binding force of any observance held by the lineage or clan as deriving from an ancestor whose edict it is said to have been. The concept *kih*, it must be remembered, is applied not only to ritual prohibitions but also to ritual injunctions. The sheepskin loin cover for the dead is also a *kihar*. The moral imperative of a ritual prohibition or injunction—a *kihar*—is connected with the dependence of the lineage on its ancestors' goodwill for its survival and welfare. And there is another point. The most sacred duty owed by son to parent or parent to child is the performance of his or her funeral ceremonies. It is unthinkable, and it has never been known, for a native to fail in this duty, though nobody can compel him to do it. This is the case in spite of the fact that funeral rites are also the concern of the whole lineage and clan. In funeral ceremonies the structure of the lineage and clan emerges into action as perhaps in no other Tale institution. And it emerges in such a way as to show up clearly how the moral responsibility of the individual to his forbears is a function of his rights and duties as a lineage member and is a factor in the cohesion of the lineage.

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Funeral rites have a twofold symbolic value for the Tallensi. They symbolize the corporate unity and identity of the lineage and clan and its ties with other clans; but they also symbolize the group's dependence on and moral responsibility to their ancestors, collectively and individually. This is shown very well in the custom of each clan's using a particular kind of loin cover for the dead and in the associated custom of swearing an oath by the father's loin cover. They show that ritual symbols of social differentiation and association among the Tallensi are not mere emblems of intergroup differences. They are emotionally charged symbols of the fact that the corporate unity and identity of the group is created by the moral bonds of its members among themselves and of each member with the ancestors of the group. We shall return to this presently.

In spite of their deviant mortuary customs, the people of Gorogo, Ka'ar, and Teelag consider themselves to be, and are considered to be, as much a part of the Talis aggregate as any other Talis clans. Conversely it is known among the Talis that some clans of Gorisi and Namnam, as well as many of the *tendaanditib* lineages of the Sie district, dress their dead in a sheepskin loin cover. The Talis do not on this account acknowledge any of these groups as Talis or as being kin to them. Again, some clans in the Sie district gird their dead with an oribi skin. But they deny having any ties with Ka'ar. Indeed, their elders are quite unaware that they have this custom in common with Ka'ar, and are not in the least interested in hearing of it. This is a significant difference between the Namoos, all of whom have the same mortuary observances, and the Talis and their congeners. This difference extends to other manifest ritual usages that serve to differentiate corporate units from one another.

Certain other funeral rites are also stressed as rigorously distinctive of the Talis and as common to all of them. All Talis, it is said, conclude a funeral by the rite of *yma ma'ala*. Members of the deceased's maximal lineage, and the heads of the other lineages of the clan, contribute a large number of fowls, which are slaughtered as a sacrifice to mark the final departure of the dead person from the social sphere of the living and his aggregation to the ancestors. In reality, almost every clan has its own modifications in the details of the rite. In some clans it is performed for all males who have begotten children, in others for lineage heads only, in others for both men and women; and the people of Kpata'ar omit the rite altogether. The rite is found also among many of the *tendaanditib* lineages of the Sie district, with diverse local variations.

Similar local variations from clan to clan appear in the other parts of the funeral ceremonies where the usages of the Talis contrast with those of the Namoos, and many, if not most, of these distinct customs are found among the *tendaanditib* of the Sie district.

These variations in ritual observances, and their correlation with structural ties and cleavages, are constantly brought to an observer's attention. They form a common topic of discussion and comment at funeral ceremonies. One is often reminded of them by the behaviour of women at these ceremonies. A woman's husband's clan very often has different ritual practices from those of her father's clan. Now, married

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extra or exceptional avoidances usually consider them to be more distinctive of themselves, though not more important, than the general taboos. In other words, these avoidances emphasize the relative autonomy of the maximal lineage in opposition to the coherence of the ideological community; and this is the more conspicuous the farther away from the centre a clan is located.

It is significant, however, that clans with additional or exceptional totems are not considered to be the less Talis for that reason. The people of Degal, for instance, who belong to the central cluster of Hill Talis, claim to be 'Talɔŋ' *par excellence* in virtue of their supposed descent from the primordial, earth-begotten tɛndaana of the Hills. It is a question of degree, the primacy of lineage membership being relatively stressed in the totemic avoidances of the deviant clans, the interdependence of corporate units in the greater aggregate being relatively stressed by most other Talis. From the point of view of the Hill Talis, there are, as we have learnt, two levels of interdependence amongst the Talis. There is the interdependence of the Hill clans *inter se*, focused in the External *Bɔyar* cult, which extends as far as Zubiuŋ; and there is the interdependence of all the Talis—and in fact of Talis and Namoos—in the wider politico-ritual synthesis which emerges most conspicuously in the cycle of the Great Festivals. The clans associated in the narrower synthesis all tend to have the tortoise and the water-tortoise taboos; the clans associated only in the wider synthesis tend to have taboos stressing their genealogical autonomy; Zubiuŋ and Gbizug, which form the transition region, as it were, between the narrow association and the wide association, observe the tortoise and water-tortoise taboos, but do not consider them to be as distinctive of themselves as their special avoidances.

But this, we must not forget, is not the whole story. Totemic taboos, funeral rites, and *Bɔyar* ritual are symbols. What they symbolize is the body of moral and ritual norms correlated to each of the three zones of social relations we have been considering—the norms which are the organizing values of lineage, clan, and ritual community. As these rest, in the final count, on the mystical supremacy of the ancestor spirits, we can say summarily that these ritual observances symbolize the ancestors in the various aspects under which they govern social and individual life among the Talis.

The Significance of Animals as Totems

The totemic avoidances of the Tallensi all refer to animals, and it may well be asked if they have any common characteristics or outstanding peculiarities from the native point of view. Totemic avoidances of the type we have recorded are found throughout Voltaic culture; in fact, they are a notable feature of social organization among all the negroid peoples of the western Sudan. Not only is their pattern the same throughout this region, but the animal species most commonly prohibited are the same, and the myths accounting for the taboos have the same form.[1] To

[1] Cf. for example, the reference to the *Tne* among the Bambara, in Monteil, Charles, op. cit. 134–5.

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621 578 423 comes under the ritual jurisdiction of the Degal tɛndaana, the ritual 'owner' of the land of Bunkiuk, the Gɔlibdaana's clan. As the head of Bunkiuk and headman of Tɛnzugu, which includes Degal, he held political authority over all the territory under the ritual jurisdiction of the latter. Hence this strip of territory, as far as the watercourse, belonged to him. The people dwelling there were no concern of his; let them go elsewhere if they wished.

The Yinduurna'aba, a simple and inarticulate old man, who has never mastered the wiles of modern headmanship, protested vehemently. The Gɔlibdaana's arguments were untenable. The ritual jurisdiction of tɛndaanas had nothing to do with the matter. In any case the Zandoya tɛndaana would contest the Degal tɛndaana's claim. Everybody knows that tɛndaanas acknowledge no boundaries. The group in question was a segment of Zandoya. How could they belong to any other political unit than the latter? To talk of their abandoning the land on which their ancestors had dwelt was preposterous. Indeed, the whole situation was something quite unheard of; it could never have occurred before the coming of the white man, when everyone had his acknowledged place in the society. The truth was that the Gɔlibdaana was deliberately trying to entice his people away from him.

There the matter rested. The case was widely discussed and public opinion, except for the Gɔlibdaana's supporters, sided unanimously with the Yinduurna'aba. Five other cases of the same kind came to my notice; and in all of them the verdict of native custom is unequivocal; social affiliation and not alleged territorial boundaries define the extent of a community. Even the new settlements, though they sprawl more widely than the old settlements and are usually surrounded by considerable tracts of uninhabited land, have no defined geographical boundaries. They can and do go on expanding.

The Concept of the Tɛŋ

621 A Tale settlement can only be identified as a unit by reference to the lineage relationships, politico-ritual ties and cleavages, and jural rights and duties, prevailing within it and between it and its neighbours. That is why we have avoided the word 'village', which conjures up the image of a neatly isolated, compact territorial unit. *Tɛŋ* (pl. *tɛs*) is the native concept denoting a settlement; but no English translation can convey its exact sense. In some ways it is reminiscent of the deme of ancient Greece, a coalescence of local association, lineage organization, common religious cult, and political solidarity. None of these factors serves to demarcate a *tɛŋ* absolutely from adjacent *tɛs*; all of them link together neighbouring *tɛs* or parts of *tɛs* as closely in respect of that one category of social relations as they unite segments of the same *tɛŋ*. A settlement is only a relatively autonomous community. One might perhaps define it as the region of maximum overlap of all the categories of social relations found among the Tallensi.

621 619 824 Native linguistic usage reflects this, for *tɛŋ* has a width of reference varying with the situation. A man beginning a discourse on marriage with '*ti tɛŋɔ, nyen di pɔŋa* . . .—In this our land, if you marry a wife . . .'

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is thinking of the country at large as a unit with respect to marriage customs. Hill Talis often describe Tongo, Zubiuŋ, and Zoo as one *teŋ*. They are thinking of the close bonds uniting these places in opposition to themselves. But Tongo, Zubiuŋ, and Zoo are always distinct *teŋ* to one another. Tenzugu is described as a single *teŋ* when the coherence and close interdependence of the group of clans inhabiting it are emphasized; but when their genealogical cleavages loom foremost they are designated as separate *teŋ*. In the struggle for political dominance now going on between the head of Kpata'ar and the head of Bunkiuk, the partisans of both bitterly denounce one another for 'breaking up the unity of the *teŋ*', but insist, at the same time, that each clan holds its *teŋ* in its own right and does not come under the jurisdiction of any other, according to native custom.

Underlying these variations in usage is the generic conception of *teŋ* as a locality defined in relation to a corporate unit of social structure, a lineage, clan, or interconnected group of clans; and the variation in the width of reference of the concept reflects the variation in the range of corporate solidarity that is effective in different situations. In war the Tenzugu clans all hold together; in the matter of marriage one of them might quite easily come into conflict with another. The confluence of local, lineage, and politico-ritual relations, as we have previously noted, is the keel of Tale social organization.

Teŋ, like all the key concepts of Tale social organization, has a ritual significance as well. It denotes the Earth in its mystical aspect, either in the generic sense or in the specific sense of a particular sacred spot and its precincts. What is a *teŋ* in the sphere of secular relations may be, but often is not, a *teŋ* in the system of religious beliefs. There are two aspects to locality as a correlate of social structure: the secular aspect and the sacred. They merge in the social organization and the social philosophy of the Tallensi, and consequently also in linguistic usage. Sometimes one aspect is the focus of a social activity, sometimes the other, sometimes both together. If a man repeats the conventional formula, '*Teŋ la pu sayat xiem la ni*—The Earth does not permit bloodshed', his exclusive reference to the mystical aspect of the Earth is obvious; if he says of another settlement or region, '*Ba teŋ la mar ki pam*—Their land has plenty of grain', he is thinking solely of the material and secular denotation of the word; if he says of Ba'ari, '*Bam teŋ kuob la pu dara*—In their settlement farms are not sold', his implication to anyone familiar with native beliefs is that it is a taboo of the Earth (in its mystical character) at Ba'ari to sell parcels of the earth (in its material character).

Postponing for the moment the further elucidation of these ideas, we may note their most commonplace expression in Tale custom. A settlement name is *ipso facto* the name of the clan or group of maximal lineages whose home it is. A custom arising out of the rule of clan exogamy is that of addressing a wife by an appellation indicating her clan of birth. Most often it is the clan place-name, e.g. Zubiena, Wakiina. It may be the name of a well-known *tengban* in her natal settlement, e.g. Ba'ari women are called Saniiga, after the sacred grove of that name in Ba'ari. It may be a name indicating differences of custom and belief that distinguish her

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of his lineage or clan, other than those whom he describes as his 'fathers' or 'sons'.

Every Tale clan is anchored to a particular locality from which it takes its name. In the central area of Taleland, around the Tong Hills, the present clan settlements appear to date back not less than eight to ten generations. But they have not been and are not territorially static. There are no strict territorial boundaries between adjacent settlements. The homesteads of a settlement merge with those of the adjacent settlements, and the boundaries between them are definable only in social terms, as a function of their ecological and politico-ritual relations at a given time. In the same way every segment of a clan—that is, each of its component maximal lineages—is anchored to a local subdivision of the clan settlement, though many of its members may be dispersed elsewhere.

A striking feature of Tale social organization is the system of inter-clan linkages which constitutes one of the principal forces of cohesion in the society. The genealogically and socially autonomous maximal lineage or clan is not a closed group. The component maximal lineages that form the segments of adjacent clans have ties of clanship identical with those that unite them to one another within their respective clans. Thus if two adjacent clans have segments A, B, C, and D, E, F, G, respectively, then A (but not B or C) may have clanship ties with D (but not with E, F, or G); B may have clanship ties only with E, and C with F. Each of these maximal lineages also has clanship ties with segments of other neighbouring clans. Thus each component maximal lineage of a clan has a field of clanship that includes the other segments of the clan as well as segments of other clans. This results in a network of interlocking clanship ties that embraces all the separate clans of Taleland. All the Talis clans and the main block of Namoo clans are interlocked in this way in two clusters which are in turn similarly connected at certain points. Moreover, this system of linkages ties the Tale aggregate on to adjacent clans of other neighbouring 'tribes'. Thus we observe that at this level of social structure—the skeletal level, so to speak—as in its territorial and cultural relationship to neighbouring 'tribes', Tale society is a segment of a greater society. The network of inter-clan linkages is one of the principal factors by which the socio-geographic region we have called Taleland is differentiated as a distinct segment of this greater society.

It is also one of the main factors of social equilibrium in Tale society. Dissension between neighbouring clans is kept in check by the mediation of maximal lineages linked by identical ties to both; and warfare is inhibited from disrupting the entire social order by the intervention of social and ritual obligations arising *inter alia* out of the fact that enemies are related directly or indirectly by clanship ties. It is this, in part, that gives Tale wars the complexion of acute family quarrels.